

BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE

August 22, 1962

Subject: U.S. Military Aid to Latin America

QUESTION: In the light of the criticism from sectors of Congress and the press concerning the impact which U.S. military aid to Latin American republics may have on the democratic institutions of those countries, what studies or adjustments is the United States making in our program of military assistance to those countries?

CURRENT SITUATION REPORT

Major themes of such criticism of U.S. military aid is that: a) it strengthens the Latin American military and encourages them to seek to take power in their countries, b) it contributes to an arms race among various Latin American powers and causes growth of military manpower with its consequent drain inhibiting economic and social progress, c) it earns ill-will for the United States when Latin American tyrants use U.S. grant military hardware against their own people, and d) the amount of our military assistance for so-called internal security is too great.

Much of the criticism overlooks the alteration of our strategic concept in the last two years, in which we have come to think of hemisphere defense as mainly anti-submarine warfare and in which we have had to broaden our idea of internal security measures to counter violence by organized bands in addition to the traditional concept of subversion.

An editorial in the WASHINGTON POST August 13 estimated that Latin America spends about \$1.4 billion annually on its military expenses, six times its contribution to the Inter-American Development Bank, and as much as the sum of United States military aid to Latin America over the last twelve years.

SUGGESTED POINTS IN REPLY

A problem which all the American republics share is how to be safe internally against the organized subversion and violence which are integral parts of the ideology and tactics of the communist enemies of democracy.

The serious threat of communist subversion and violence within Latin America was recognized by the Foreign Ministers of American States in Resolution I of the Punta del Este meeting.

Activities of guerillas armed with smuggled weapons in Colombia, Venezuela and other countries show this threat should not be minimized.

Because of it, most countries need U.S. help in improving their capacity for internal defense.

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For the U.S. to furnish this assistance is consistent with Resolution II, paragraph 3, of the Punta del Este meeting, which urges OAS members to cooperate with one another in order to strengthen their capacity to counteract threats or acts of aggression, subversion, or other dangers to peace and security resulting from the continued intervention in this hemisphere of the Sino-Soviet powers.

We keep these programs under continuing review.

The Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense support these military assistance programs as being necessary and desirable. So do our ambassadors in the other American republics.

Our ambassadors also report that Latin American military officers generally favor economic and social development and usually act as a stabilizing element in preventing political domination by the extreme right or left.

The democratic tendencies which generally prevail among the military officers of the other American republics are strengthened, I hope, by the periods of training which many of them undergo in the United States as a part of our military assistance program.